

The new Archaeological Museum

brings ancient culture to life

The new Archaeological Museum Aruba reopened in November 2008 in downtown Oranjestad, in walking distance of the main bus station. It provides the opportunity to step into ancient Indian life in a reproduction of a scaled-down *maloca*, a hut where natives lived, in an interactive experience including cooking aromas, artistic renderings, and sound. One can study the shells and remains found at the Tanki Flip archaeological site and visit an artistic impression of an Amerindian cave etched with Indian rock drawings. There is a wealth of information about the

migrations of the Amerindians to Aruba, including the first tribes of unknown origin and later the Arawak-speaking Caquetios.

The state-of-the-art museum moved into the Ecury family complex in downtown Oranjestad. The recently completed 1-1/2 year restoration of their former residence is awesome; the original walls, paintings, architectural details and tiling remain from more than a century ago.

The approximately 12-million-dollar project, featuring ancient artifacts, pottery, tools and art, financed by the European Development Fund, the Government of Aruba and the cultural fund UNOCA,



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two-story buildings originally constructed in colonial times. As is the case with many old Aruban homes, as the family grew, additions were made, evidenced by differences in the floor levels. **Schelpstraat 40** (painted red with white gingerbread wood trim), resembles a Caribbean town villa. It is the birthplace of Boy Ecury, a member of the Dutch underground during World War II who died at age 22 in front of a Nazi firing squad. The second floor was built circa 1917.

Schelpstraat 42, the green mansion built in 1929 and then linked to the older yellow *cunucu* (country) house built in 1870 located to the right, was a dwelling house complex built in several phases. **Schelpstraat 44** is located to the left of the green mansion. The oldest building in the complex that now houses the cafeteria was the former location of "Fruteria Aruba". It was built circa 1867 by Louis Rosenberg as a dwelling

house and later purchased by the Ecury family. Located behind the glass building, **J. G. Emanstraat 14** is a dwelling house believed to have been constructed around the 1900s, partly built on an old water cistern, the shell of which is displayed. **J. G. Emanstraat 16-20** is a block of three connected houses later bought by the Ecury family. In the modern glass building, stones from the original outer walls are placed in glass inlays on the floor.

Museum collaborators will "meet you" as you enter the museum. The story of the Ecury family is told as well as the history of the buildings. Amerindian cultural continuums describe life during the three periods of Indian habitation, also showing their influence today on food, music, names, vocabulary and symbols. According to Marguerita Wever, responsible for public activities at the museum, "This is not just a static collection of artifacts and ceramics on display; the museum is a dynamic, modern and interactive exhibition utilizing hands-on activities and inter-active techniques stimulating all the senses. There is an interesting juxtaposition of past and present with the very modern buildings that house ancient artifacts."

Art Galleries

Toyota Art Gallery 168, a welcoming, spacious and dynamic haven for art lovers, opened its doors in May 2007, thanks to the generous sponsorship of Hans Schnog of Toyota Aruba. Each exhibition is introduced with a unique specially-

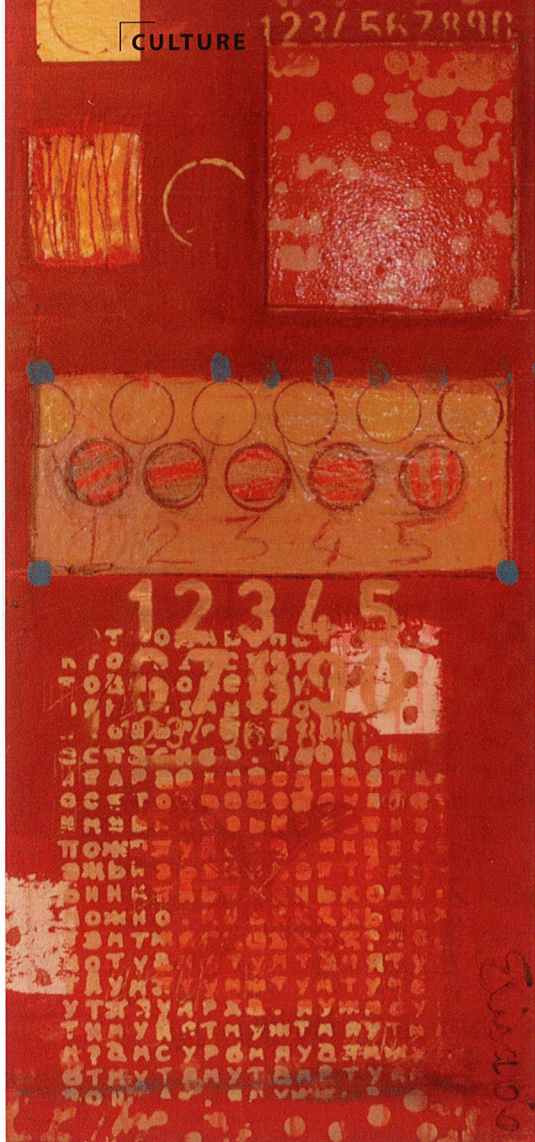
Main picture: Much can be learned about Amerindian life from ceramic artifacts.

aims at safeguarding both the archaeological and architectural heritage of Aruba. It provides Aruba with one of the largest and most comprehensive collections depicting pre-historic and early historic Amerindian life and culture in the Caribbean. There is also a changing exposition of original artwork by contemporary artists interpreting Aruba's history. The museum offers public programs including lectures, education projects, temporary exhibits and workshops, as well as a library and learning center.

The Ecury complex, the family home from 1870 – 1997, is a cluster of single and



Exhibitions include paintings, installations, sculptures, photography, drawings and mixed media



Above: The Access Art Gallery focuses on local and regional art.

Below right: Stay in town for the weekly Bon Bini Festival held every Tuesday evening.

themed opening reception reflecting the subject of the works and countries of origin of the artists. Solo exhibitions have featured such well-known local artists as Stan Kuiperi and Nancy Folkeringa as well as sculptress Maritza Erasmus. Artist and curator Michiko Takatsu explains, "The Toyota Art Gallery is a foundation formed to help and support the island's artists and improve the quality of art in Aruba and ultimately in other Caribbean islands."

The Access Art Gallery on Caya Betico Croes is housed in one of the last pre-World War II buildings remaining in the city, originally the home of the Arends family. Traditional patterned floor tiles, an interior design featuring period architectural detail and a long balcony

meld with meticulously presented modern and contemporary works of art. Opened in June 2003, the gallery's focus is on local and regional art from the Caribbean and Latin America with a more international range planned. All art is for sale.

Throughout the year, Access Art presents exhibitions that have included paintings, installations, sculptures, photography, drawings, jewelry and mixed media. There are also lectures by exhibiting local or international artists as well as dance, musical and theatrical presentations. The gallery's new art house theatre opened last July, to the delight of film buffs. Tuesday is avant-garde night, with unedited, semi-documentary and documentary films. Thursday is foreign film night, with showings of international art house films. On Saturdays, there will be showings of concerts and ballets as well as unplugged live performances. The theatre seats 60 – 80 people.

Museums

The **Museo Historico** is proudly positioned between two of Aruba's oldest monuments, Fort Zoutman and the Willem III Tower. The collection consists of artifacts acquired since its opening in 1983. There are audio-visual programs on various topics related to Aruba's history and a permanent exhibition outlining main events in Aruban history. Smaller themed exhibitions are on periodic display while the museum's touchtone television system describes other exhibits. If visiting the museum on a Tuesday, stay in town for the Bon Bini Festival.



Over 50,000 coins are displayed in the fascinating Numismatic Museum.

Providing visitors with an insight into the Bible and its use on Aruba, the varied collection at the **Drs. A. van den Doel Bible Museum** next to the Protestant Church in downtown Oranjestad contains historic bibles in Dutch and other languages. There is an edition of the Septuagint used by early church fathers and a few Hebrew editions.

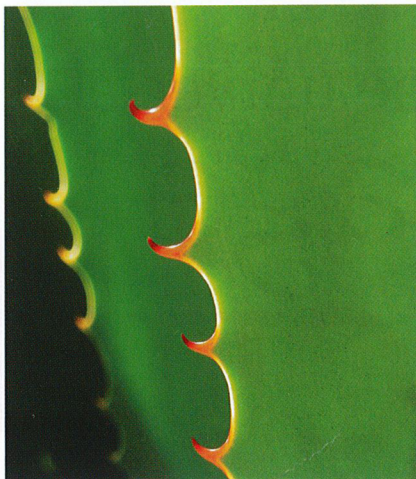
The **Museo Numismatico** (Numismatic Museum) also in downtown Oranjestad close to the bus station houses the private collections of the late Mario Odor, packed with over 50,000 coins from over 400 nations. There are more than 100 separate collections, including primate, strange, ancient, proof, counter stamp, over-struck, mini, chop-coins, errors, leprosarium, gold, ration, commemoratives, center-holed, scalloped, square, wooden, tokens, medals and food coupons. Odor had started collecting money in the 1940s and devoted sixty years of his life to his hobby.

The Aruba Numismatic Museum is one of the top seven money museums in the world; its virtual website is one of the top five. Through meticulous documentation, custom displays and professional assistance, the museum slices the history of Aruba and the world into compelling chapters that will spark your curiosity. Rather than concentrating only on a coin's intrinsic value, the museum's collections breathe life into the era, country and circumstances in which it circulated.

Follow the timeline through the island's turbulent history with shell and bead money of the Caquetio Indians, *reales* of the Spanish conquerors, currency brought by European colonists, and coins used in trade by the Dutch West India Company. Used for almost a century, *guillotines* were Spanish coins cut into pie-shape sections. Coins in the 20th century reflect the development of the Aruban economy, World War II, formation of the Netherlands Antilles in 1954 and *status aparte* of Aruba in 1986. International coins include those from the Byzantine Empire, Roman Empire, ancient Greece, mystic India, and the Chinese dynasties; some date back to 900 BC and are named in the Bible.

Aruba's economy was once dependent upon aloe, with one-third of its land covered by plantations. The **Aloe Museum** located at the Hato Plantation that dates back to 1890 is a national depository for ancient aloe tools and equipment with a complete library on the

history, manufacture and qualities of aloe vera. The story of aloe is told on a tour of the modern state-of-the-art aloe factory.



In addition to train videos, a play-table, and choo-chooing trains in action, a large collection of model trains, airplanes, automobiles and buses are found at the

Model Train Museum in San Nicolas on the way to Baby Beach. Jaap de Vries' collection also includes the contributions of returning tourists. Trains are from Germany, USA, United Kingdom and The Netherlands and date back to 1895.

Francisco Chirino is the founder of the **Museo di Deporte** (Sports Museum), dedicated to the achievements of Aruban and international athletes past and present. This small museum displays 29 different sports and a collection of almost 2000 pieces of local and international memorabilia, including pins, scrapbooks, photos, trophies, uniforms and certificates. A wealth of information about U.S. Baseball Hall of Fame stars is also included. Among a proud roster of Arubian athletes are the RCA soccer team that won championships forty times in its seventy years of existence and Evelyn Farrel, the first woman and Aruban to participate in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984 in the 100-meter event.

Museums

■ Museo Numismatico

Next to central bus station, Oranjestad
☎ 297-582-8831 🌐 www.museumaruba.org
Open Monday thru Friday, 9 am – 4 pm
Saturdays 8 am – 12 noon

■ Museo Archeologico

Schelpstraat 42
☎ 297-582-8979
✉ archo@setarnet.aw
Call for opening hours

■ Drs. A. van den Doel Museum

Wilhelminastraat 1, Oranjestad
☎ 297-582-1431
✉ bstigter@setarnet.aw
By appointment only

■ Model Trains Museum

Koolbaaibergstraat 12, San Nicolas
(on the way to Seroe Colorado)
Open Tuesday thru Saturday, 10 am – 5 pm
Open Sundays, December – April
☎/📠 584-7321

■ Museo Historico

Fort Zoutman,
Oranjestad
Open Monday
thru Friday,
9 am – 12 noon and 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm
✉ museohistoricoarubano@hotmail.com

■ Aloe Museum

Pitastraat, Oranjestad
☎ 297-588-3222 🌐 www.arubaaloe.com
Open Monday thru Friday,
8 am-5 pm
Tours 9 am – 5 pm

■ Museo di Deporte

Alto Vista 67, Noord (on the way to Alto Vista Chapel)
☎ 297-587-2397
✉ gigis@setarnet.aw
Open Monday – Saturday,
9 am – 12 noon and 5 pm – 7 pm
Sunday, 9 am – 12:30 pm



Art Galleries

■ Access Art Gallery

Caya G. F. Betico Croes 16-18
Oranjestad
☎ 297-588-7837
Open Monday thru Saturday, 10 am – 8 pm
✉ mail@access-art.org 🌐 www.accessart.org

■ Toyota Art Gallery

L. G. Smith Blvd. 114 (behind CMB Bank)
☎ 297-561-5389
Open daily except Monday, 1:30 pm – 6:30 pm
✉ artgallery168@gmail.com

■ Mar Azul Art Gallery

Marina Mall / Oranjestad
☎ 297-588-ARTE / cells 742-7482 / 563-4574
🌐 www.marazulgallery.com
Call for opening hours

■ Art Studio – Gallery Insight

Paradera Park 215
☎ 297-568-9168 / 297-582-0542
Open Monday thru Friday,
10 am – 12:30 pm, 2 pm – 5:30 pm
Weekends by appointment